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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Ms Anne-Marie Merifield
Executive Headteacher
St Edmund's Nursery School & Children's Centre
Washington Street
Girlington
Bradford
West Yorkshire
BD8 9QW

Dear Ms Merifield

Short inspection of St Edmund's Nursery School & Children's Centre

Following my visit to the school on 28 March 2019, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be outstanding in February 2015.

This school continues to be outstanding.

The leadership team has maintained the outstanding quality of education since the last inspection. You and your leadership team demonstrate exceptional commitment to research-based learning and self-analysis, resulting in high continuous self-improvement over time. You constantly review what you do, preserving the best of what you have and making changes where you have identified any weaknesses. As a result, the school is constantly improving and evolving, which is keeping learning alive and inspiring for both children and staff.

High levels of community engagement, rightly, place St Edmund's at the heart of the local community. Parent partnerships are a key strength of the school. A strong emphasis on working together with families ensures that you know your families well and parents are comfortable to leave their young children safely in your care. You work hard to break down any barriers between staff, and parents and carers. The use of first names takes away the formality of titles and helps parents to feel more confident about coming into school. Consequently, children thrive in the warm and safe learning environment you create.

You employ two parent workers who are specialist lead practitioners. The work they do is invaluable in supporting whole families. Parents talk about how they have received invaluable help with housing and health issues, which has had a positive impact on the well-being of their children. Parents appreciate the emphasis you place on improving the local area through your local community groups. Activities

such as 'Well Bradford', 'Clean Community' and 'Girlington Growers' make a positive difference to the life of local residents. Parents really value the work you do.

The '50 Things to do Before you are 5' project has been particularly successful in increasing the range of experiences you expose the children to before they leave school. You fully integrate this work into the curriculum, involving families and celebrating successes through displays and in children's records. Parents enthuse about the new things they and their children have tried, including dressing up, farm trips and picnics.

You have employed more men in early years because you recognise the need for positive role models for many of your boys. Boys are fully engaged in their learning and, as a result, are catching up quickly from their low starting points. The curriculum takes account of the needs of boys. The inclusion of a car fender in the outdoor reading area encourages boys to come and share books. Dads say that they feel more confident and comfortable to play with their children because they learn from the male staff members. One parent said, 'As a dad, having men in the room gives me reassurance to approach staff and feel confident.'

Children's learning journals celebrate the range of learning across the broad curriculum. They document how children are progressing through all the areas of learning over time. Regular observations and photographs provide evidence of the outstanding progress made throughout the year. You regularly monitor their quality and check that individual children make the progress you expect of them. However, although your formal tracking system shows you the entry and exit data for children, it is still underdeveloped and does not provide you with enough detailed analysis.

The governing body shares your passion for ensuring that young children receive a wide range of experiences to make their first years of education memorable, happy and exciting. They are committed to the local community and fully involved in the life of the school. They receive regular reports from external consultants, through which they monitor key aspects of the school's work. Recent reports on the teaching of mathematics and the provision for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have provided external verification of the high-quality education you provide. The recent federation with Lilycroft Nursery School has allowed you to reconstitute and further strengthen the governing body.

At the previous inspection, you were asked to provide additional training and support to ensure that all staff had high levels of confidence, knowledge and skills, when working with those children who had the most profound disabilities and special educational needs. This is an ongoing task for you because you are constantly training new staff and employ a large number of apprentices. However, you ensure staff receive regular training and support in order to develop their skills and knowledge. As a result, staff are confident in supporting children with SEND and children benefit from high staff ratios. All staff members sign individual healthcare plans to ensure that everyone is aware of the specific needs of these children. Regular monitoring of SEND provision provides opportunities for leaders to

pick up on any areas that need further strengthening and put comprehensive training in place.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. All staff receive regular updated safeguarding training and know what they need to do to keep children safe. Safeguarding documentation is detailed and updated appropriately. Leaders are tenacious in following up any concerns when they feel a child is at risk. They go above and beyond their statutory obligations to support vulnerable children and their families. All members of staff have been checked for their suitability to work with children and records show that you follow safer recruitment procedures for all appointments.

Although children are not of statutory school age, you have effective systems in place to follow up any absences. Your parent support workers spend time working with parents to make sure they understand the value of regular school attendance. As a result of this effective work, attendance figures are increasing, particularly for those children who are new to the country.

Inspection findings

- Leaders successfully steered the school through the federation process with Lilycroft Nursery School in January 2019. This has further enhanced the capacity of leadership at all levels. Senior leaders work across both schools and staff are strategically placed to strengthen areas of need.
- Leaders use national research well. For example, children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds receive individual plans detailing the additional learning experiences they will receive. As a result, this group of children are making at least good progress from their starting points. This is because disadvantaged children are well supported in their journey to becoming more confident learners.
- Leaders value the work of their staff, who in turn feel valued and motivated. A strong commitment to 'growing your own' has resulted in many staff receiving further training, resulting in many promotions within school. Further assistance is provided through additional time to support those staff who are studying for degrees in order to become teachers.
- Provision for children with SEND is particularly strong. Carefully planned small-group sessions ensure children receive tailored activities matched to their individual targets. Consequently, children with SEND make similar or better progress than other children. This is because they are well integrated into the school and receive high-quality support from staff who know and understand their needs well. Parents are fully involved in planning and reviewing the progress their children make. One parent stated, 'The nursery is quite simply amazing at understanding the needs of individual children and their families.'

- Children grow in self-assurance as they move through the school and approach known adults and each other with confidence. They enjoy a wide range of thoughtfully planned activities tightly focused on teaching key skills. For example, outside in the sandpit, children were highly engaged in using sieves to find out what would not fit through the holes. Another child was working with an adult, filling containers with sand and counting how many spades full of sand were required. Other children were developing mark-making skills as they prepared a Mother's Day card. Adults demonstrate excellent understanding of how to engage young children, resulting in happy children who show high levels of concentration and focus, and who can communicate their thoughts and feelings.
- The strong emphasis on developing early speaking and listening skills prepares children well for early phonics work. Adults use every opportunity to extend speaking skills through play. During a small-group session making dens, adults questioned children to extend their thinking skills and modelled their answers in order to develop the children's language skills. As a result of the adults' skilful use of questioning and modelling of correct vocabulary, children began to use the correct vocabulary for themselves.
- Children leave Nursery as well-rounded individuals ready for Reception because adults have high expectations. During family dining time, even the youngest children display high levels of independence, carrying their own plates and clearing away at the end of lunch. Behaviour and attitudes are exceptional because staff provide excellent role models and relationships are positive. The strong emphasis on self-regulation teaches children how to moderate their own behaviour.
- Provision for the large number of children who do not speak English on entry to school is outstanding. Staff, volunteers and trainees are appointed from within the local community, supporting children to develop home languages and English. High staffing ratios enable adults to spend quality time talking and modelling English to individuals and to small groups. As a result, children learn English quickly. One parent stated, 'My daughter has started communicating in English much more since she started at the nursery.' Booklets for parents explaining the importance of early education help to allay any fears parents from abroad may have about how their children will learn.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the formal assessment system fully meets the needs of the school's complex cohorts and is flexible enough to enable governors to monitor the progress of different groups of children from their starting points.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Bradford. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Janet Lunn
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, I met with you, the head of school, two specialist leader practitioners, the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and four governors. I spoke to 27 parents and considered the 21 written responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents. I also considered the 17 responses of staff to the online questionnaire. We met throughout the day to discuss different aspects of the school's work and visited lessons together. I scrutinised documents relating to safeguarding and looked at assessment information, including children's learning journals.